



What is your pregnancy risk factor?

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May 2022

When it comes to lead exposure, do you know what your risk factors are? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends lead testing for pregnant and lactating women who have one or more risk factors for lead exposure:

- Have Pica Syndrome (i.e., they compulsively consume non-food products; for example, clay, pottery or soil).
- Consume foods, condiments or sweets from Mexico, Central America or Asia. Countries with few lead laws.
- Store or cook with lead-glazed ceramic utensils or aluminum pressure cookers.
- Use of herbal/alternative medicines or folk remedies containing Lead.
- Use of ceremonial cosmetics or make-up that contain lead.



A few years ago, the Science Direct website published a study by Ambulatory Pediatrics showing that lead freely crosses the placenta.

The study was conducted on 15 pregnant women, most of whom were Hispanics. The women were lead poisoned due to the following risk behaviors: ingestion of clay and soil, ingestion of lead paint chips, home renovation, and use of complementary or alternative medicines. The study concluded that as a consequence of eating non-food products and breathing in lead in dust, lead crossed the placenta and their child's blood lead levels were even higher than their mothers.

According to the Organization of Healthy Children, breastfeeding is generally safe for women with high blood lead levels. However, babies of nursing mothers who have high blood lead levels should be closely watched.

For more information, contact the Iowa Department of Public Health at (515) 281-3225 or 800-972-2026. Visit us online at [https://idph.iowa.gov/Environmental-Health-Services / Childhood-Lead-Poisoning-Prevention](https://idph.iowa.gov/Environmental-Health-Services/Childhood-Lead-Poisoning-Prevention).